



Coconino County Sheriff's Office

Bill Pribil, Sheriff

MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Date: December 10, 2009

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Northern Arizona Public Safety Agencies Continue to Assist Stranded Elk Hunters in Coconino County

Flagstaff, AZ- The Coconino County Sheriff's Office and the Coconino County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Unit continue to partner with multiple Northern Arizona public safety agencies to respond to calls for help from elk hunters who are stranded in remote areas throughout Coconino County.

There are three different types of rescue efforts being conducted by our Search and Rescue teams at this time. First are the active rescues of people needing assistance getting out of their camps. Second are those individuals or groups who have been contacted and have declined assistance. Lastly we continue to coordinate helicopter and fixed wing fly overs of the hunt areas to determine if camps are abandoned or if there are people in need of assistance.

On 12/9/09 and 12/10/09 we have worked 22 missions and all have been resolved at this time. A mission refers to person(s) calling to request assistance in getting out of their snowed-in camp or a third party requesting assistance in locating family members, either by phone or in person. Some of the missions involved groups of people. At this time, approximately 50 individuals have been assisted or have been offered assistance.

Off road conditions remain treacherous with several feet of snow and drifts up to five feet. More unsettled weather is expected over the next several days. People are advised to check weather reports before traveling, to carry emergency gear in your vehicle, and not to travel off road until conditions improve.

If you have friends or family members that you believe are still in a hunting camp or recreating in the area, please do not go to the area to try to locate or assist them. Travel on many of the roads requires specialized equipment. Contact the Coconino County Sheriff's Office at 1-800-338-7888 or 928-774-4523 to speak with Dispatch to report an overdue party.



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Stranded individuals may not have cell phones or most likely are in areas where cell reception is limited. Arizona Game and Fish Officers will be flying over the area in an attempt to assess rescue needs. If you are in contact with someone who is stranded, please inform those individuals to signal the aircraft with a mirror, an SOS in the snow, tarp on the hood of a car, or whatever means are available.

Responses are being prioritized by the circumstances surrounding each incident, to include: provisions available to the stranded individuals, their geographic location, the number of individuals in each party, and the estimated threat level for each group.

Methods of rescue will include air lifts by helicopter, ground extractions conducted by rescuers on foot, snow mobiles, snow cats, and a vehicle equipped with a rubber track system.

Coconino County Sheriff's Office and the Coconino County Sheriff's Search and Rescue Unit have operated as the lead agency in this incident. We would like to thank the many cooperating agencies to include: Arizona Department of Public Safety provided a helicopter, snow cat, and personnel; Arizona Public Service provided a helicopter, snow cat, and personnel; Arizona Game and Fish provided a fixed wing aircraft and numerous personnel; Civil Air Patrol provided a fixed wing aircraft and personnel; Recreation Resource Management provided snow cat and personnel; United States Forest Service provided snowmobiles and numerous personnel. Thank you to the many other agencies and personnel who have offered assistance.

- For additional Weather Information: www.noaa.gov
- For additional Northern Arizona Forest Roads Information: www.coconinoforest.us (see left side Current Conditions, then select the district you are interested in)
- <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/coconino/conditions/current-district.shtml#flagctr> for Flagstaff area Forest Service roads
- <http://www.fs.fed.us/r3/coconino/conditions/current-district.shtml#mogrim> for Mogollon Rim area Forest Service roads
- For Snow Play Information call the Flagstaff Visitors Center at 877-878-9377 (7 days a week)

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